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not sparingly employed, are of the best. The single plate thus far published is well executed, but to an American eye the prominence accorded the name of the publishers savors rather too much of an advertisement. The journal is, however, on the whole one of which both the founder and the scientific world may well be proud, and for which all will join in wishing that abundant success for the future which the present numbers promise.

HENRY B. WARD.

The Weigert Methods. — Prof. C. J. Herrick has published in the *New York State Hospital's Bulletin* for October, 1897, a report upon a series of experiments with the Weigert staining methods. The author has in contemplation a study of the components of the cranial nerves in bony fishes, and as this rests largely on the myelination of the nerves, a careful study of the Weigert methods has preceded it. The results, satisfactory as well as unsatisfactory, are given for the different fixing reagents, mordants, etc., and form a body of valuable suggestions for those who propose applying these methods to the lower vertebrates.

BOTANY.

Britton and Brown's Flora.[1] — As a rule, large undertakings proceed slowly, and although Professor Britton's friends had known for some years that he was at work on a new manual of the general region covered by the familiar work of Dr. Gray, most of them were surprised when confronted with the first volume of the book in 1896. The prompt appearance of the second volume, and the publication of the third and concluding volume within less than two years from the appearance of the first, are no less surprising than was the early commencement of the work, and its industrious authors are to be congratulated on their energy and the perfection of their plans.

It was a happy thought, that of placing not only a description but a figure of each species in the hands of students at a price not too high for the rather cramped purse of the average botanist, and doing it has led to the illustration of 4162 species, belonging to 1103 genera and 177 families, by figures drawn from nature for the work. No less commendable is the effort to bring together in the index all of the popular names employed for the wild plants of the region covered — a task in which the scholarship of Judge Brown has proved no less serviceable than the botanical acumen of Dr. Britton in the management of the systematic details.

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[1] *An Illustrated Flora of the Northern United States, Canada, and the British Possessions, from Newfoundland to the Parallel of the Southern Boundary of Virginia, and from the Atlantic Ocean Westward to the 102d Meridian.* By Nathaniel Lord Britton, Ph.D., and Hon. Addison Brown. In three volumes. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons. Vol. iii, Apocynaceæ to Compositæ, 1898, 4°, pp. xiv + 588, many figures in the text.

As a general thing, floras of regions that have been so long and so well studied as the eastern United States are compends of species which have been published previously in monographs of genera, accounts of special collections, and the like, their chief value consisting in the skillful elimination of insufficiently grounded species and the provision of keys of all grades, by which rapid and accurate diagnosis is made of those which are maintained. The *Illustrated Flora* claims conservatism in the admission of new species, but admits that "it is better to err in illustrating too many forms, rather than in giving too few"; and besides splitting composite species into forms which really conservative botanists are disposed to unite, it contains, especially in the third volume, a considerable number of original descriptions which will render its possession indispensable to future students of the American flora, whether they agree with its authors or not. Especial attention should be called to the dozen or more asters characterized as new species, not to mention the very large number of forms in the same genus which are given new varietal names, as a result of the preliminary revision of this difficult genus by Professor Burgess.

No descriptive manual of recent times is likely to be more diversely judged by the botanical public than the one under review. Its aims are excellent. Its keys and figures usually give a Latin name for any individual specimen, and the non-professional user, by following the naïve suggestion to use the index of common names in connection with the figures, is likely to make surprising and no doubt gratifying progress in the acquisition of this sort of information. But he is likely, if he progress to the comparison of the characters of his specimens with the descriptive text, to find some puzzling interlocking of the species that have received names. He is sure, also, to find that the Latin names used are not those that he will find in common use in other botanical, horticultural, and pharmaceutical works that he is likely to consult, if his studies are technical, nor in the usual works relating to the flora of the eastern United States, if he be a botanist or botanically inclined. If already familiar enough with the last-mentioned works to have acquired the habit of opening them readily to any desired family or genus of plants, he will also be annoyed because the sequence of families in the present work is not at all the same. These differences come from an effort to follow the sequence of groups of the great German treatise of Engler and Prantl, on the families of plants, and the nomenclature rules of the Botanical Club of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, as exemplified in the check list of the plants of eastern North America, published by its committee in 1893–94. Less objection will be made to the first than to the second of these changes from American custom, and, notwithstanding the difficulties of the undertaking, the authors of the book have been reasonably consistent in carrying out their ideas, so that it is going to prove an important factor in fixing the names preferred by the Neo-American school upon our plants; whether wisely or unwisely, it may be left for the future to show.

T.

Detmer and Moor's Physiology.[1] —The guide to practical laboratory work in a comparatively new field never comes amiss, and although several such guides in vegetable physiology are now in the hands of English-speaking teachers, this translation of Detmer's well-known *Praktikum* is a very welcome addition to their shelves. Nature study is frequently spoken of as a means of training the power of observation, but it is useful even to a greater extent as an educational factor, because it is an experimental study if properly pursued. Experimentation is largely a matter of personal ingenuity, like mechanical invention. In any direction, its foundations are laid by a small number of specially gifted men. But just as soon as their methods are understood, they may be applied by hundreds of other students to the solving of problems that are everywhere awaiting solution. Every book which, like Detmer's, outlines the general field of study and indicates the simplest apparatus and methods for attacking it, paves the way for the elaboration of refinements in the investigation of special subjects.

The topics treated are: the physiology of nutrition, and the physiology of growth and movements resulting from irritability. For these

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[1] *Practical Plant Physiology.* An introduction to original research for students and teachers of natural science, medicine, agriculture, and forestry. By Dr. W. Detmer. Translated from the second German edition by S. A. Moor. 8°, pp. xix + 555. 184 illustrations. London, Swan, Sonnenschein & Co. New York, The Macmillan Company.